

APPLICATION FOR SCHOOL CHARTER:
A PROSPECTUS

Submitted to:

**Honorable Bart Peterson, Mayor,
Indianapolis**

Submitted by:

**Mount Carmel Community School Corporation
4352 North Mitthoeffer Road
Indianapolis, Indiana 46235**

May 1, 2002

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Mission: The Mount Carmel Community School Corporation envisions a school that will provide a safe, open, and learning centered environment that incorporates inquiry and problem based instructional techniques for at-risk students. Students will meet or exceed minimum state academic standards, demonstrate improved behavior, and develop the skills to become life-long learners who overcome the academic and social challenges of their global community.

The Mount Carmel School Corporation plans to address many community needs by implementing an overall focus of developing a community of learners who take responsibility for their own learning and the growth of the community through active participation in decision-making processes. The school will provide opportunities for the students, staff, parents, and community leaders, to learn in a supportive environment as curriculum is designed to help address problems faced in the community.

The school's educational foundation centers on the works of Lev S. Vygotsky who "...believe that individual development could not be understood without reference to the social and cultural context within which such development is embedded" (Driscoll, 2000, p. 240). Vygotsky called the gap between what learners are capable of doing on their own and what they are not capable of doing on their own, the "zone of proximal development". Operating within the zone of proximal development, learners reach their potential with the assistance of others through various problem-solving techniques. The curricular approach for the school will be to identify and target the "zone" of each student and provide appropriate instruction to bridge the gap between what is already developed in the learner and the potential development of the learner.

Mount Carmel School Corporation plans to meet the expressed goals. We will accurately assess learning by taking into account that every student brings different knowledge and skills to the task of any learning situation or problem-solving requirement. Learning will be assessed by obtaining evidence of behavioral and cognitive growth. Through inquiry and problem-based methods of instruction, the school will provide opportunities for individual growth and assessment utilizing a variety of tools such as state and national standardized tests, in-house periodically administered tests and quizzes, rubrics, portfolios, and exhibitions.

The School's business plan will focus on meeting the needs of our targeted student population. A comprehensive marketing plan will address the needs of the proposed student population and how our institution would meet those needs. We will obtain and/or conduct research to better identify students and understand their social and economic environment as it impacts education.

Marketing materials and methods will be developed with emphasis on the targeted population based on the research information. Additionally, focus groups may be used to obtain more information on how to fit the school into the academic and cultural environment of the student and his family.

The business plan will include the following major components: a mission statement, institution analysis, description of services, targeted student population data, financing requirements, office automation, a comprehensive marketing plan, management and organization, personnel requirements, and a financial plan.

The school will be staffed with individuals who have the credentials and experience to manage all facets of the school's financial operations. An external management consulting firm will be utilized to ensure compliance with all federal, state, and local laws and guidelines, and to offer a second level of recommendations and oversight for the school business employees.

Potential partners may come from businesses, foundation and social service agencies that will cooperate with the school to provide in-kind services, financial resources, expertise, and strategic alliances to accomplish the school's mission.

It is felt that the founding team has the experience, education, and credentials to offer expert advice in founding a Charter School. The team is composed of individuals who have experience and education in School Administration, Education, Teaching, Curriculum, Counseling and Guidance, and Special Education. Some have doctoral level training and credentials in Clinical and School Psychology, Special Education, Behavior Management, and Psychological and Educational Testing. Others are experienced in business management, law, ministry, management consulting, accounting, etc. All of these founding team members are working professionals who have participated successfully in the planning and implementation of similar/ related projects and programs in churches, ministries, businesses, and community and private agencies. The founding team has ample and unique knowledge of what will work in this particular setting. Our major focus, after the planning process, will be effective implementation to the end that the expressed mission of the school is accomplished.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Description of the Founding Group	5
Mission	6
Need	7
Educational Philosophy	8
Academic Standards	8
Curriculum	9
Assessment	9
Special Student Populations	10
Budget and Financial Matters	11
Governance and Management	11
Goals	12
Summary of Strengths	13
Appendixes	
Appendix A	14
Appendix B	42
Appendix C	46
Appendix D	74

Description of the Founding Group:

The initial planning group for this charter school effort consisted of a loosely held together group of about eighteen persons who met in smaller groups of four or five and discussed a possible philosophy of education and how a quality school might be established. The current group of seven persons was felt to be more manageable and has worked together to offer the individual expertise into a collective effort to design a proposal for a charter school.

The budgeting, finance, and accounting expertise was offered by McKinley Jones, Kevin Williams, and Tausha Thompson. Tausha is currently the staff person responsible for the budgeting and business management of the Mount Carmel Baptist Church and the Mount Carmel Christian Academy. She handles the payroll for both staffs and oversees purchasing. She is a graduate of a local Township High School and of Ball State University. McKinley Jones completed his undergraduate degree at Morris Brown In Atlanta. He obtained his MBA in Accounting in 1974 from Northwestern University, Kellogg School of Management. He is a Certified Public Accountant with experience in the business arena (Cummins Engine, Columbus, IN), and is the founding and managing partner of his own Accounting Firm. Kevin Williams is one of the Associates with Mr. Jones' firm and has also worked with other private firms (Indiana Black Expo, Inc., and United Way of Central Indiana, Inc.). Together, the three have many years experience in business, finance, budgeting, and accounting. They all have extensive experience in computer programming applications to business. All three have leadership positions in community organizations, their churches, and are on various boards of directors for other organizations.

Kellee Bognanno has provided the legal advice and direction necessary in planning for the charter. She completed her academic requirements for her law degree in 1993 and shortly after admission to the Indiana State Bar, went into private practice. She is a board member and officer of the Board of Trustees for the Sycamore School in Indianapolis.

Roger Perry has an undergraduate degree in Psychology from Indiana University and a Master of Education degree from Texas Southern University in Houston, Texas. He completed the Ph.D., in Child Clinical Psychology and Special Education at Purdue University in 1976. He has extensive experience in clinical assessment, guidance and counseling, behavior management, and special education evaluations. He has special interests in values education and research design. He has worked in agencies and in private practice for over 25 years and has provided consultation to school staffs, courts, Atterbury Job Corps Center, Indiana Boys School, Indiana Girls School, and several Head Start sites, on issues of problem behaviors and at-risk children for over 20 years. He has served on the accreditation committee for the two graduate programs at Martin University. He is a life member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.

Dr. Theron Williams holds an undergraduate degree in Psychology and the Master of Divinity Degree from Virginia Union University in Richmond, Virginia. He obtained his Doctor of Ministry degree from the Chicago Theological Seminary. He has served a

senior pastor of the Mount Carmel Baptist Church since 1987. He has special interests and expertise in counseling, management, and values education. Dr. Williams is also very interested in research as a component of social programs evaluations.

Brenda Senour is the current Secretary/Receptionist/Administrative Assistant for Mount Carmel Baptist Church. She has extensive experience in organization and management and has demonstrated a variety of business and clerical skills.

The special consultation on the professional educational aspects of the proposal was offered by Mrs. Stephanie McGregor. She completed her undergraduate degree in Education (Math and General Science) in 1989 from the University of Tennessee-Knoxville. She completed her Master of Science Degree in Educational Leadership from Indiana University. She is a licensed Indiana teacher with six years experience in Memphis and six years experience in the Lawrence Township system. She is now being certified as an Indiana School Administrator.

All the persons. Except one, are, or have been consumers of the educational system in the area. Some have been students in area schools and have had children in the same system. It was felt they could also provide invaluable sensitivity to planning issues by virtue of their personal school experiences. Resumes and Background Authorizations for each board member appear in Appendix A.

Mission:

The Mount Carmel Community School Corporation envisions a school that will provide a safe, open, and learning-centered environment that incorporates inquiry and problem-based instructional techniques for at-risk students. Students will meet or exceed minimum state academic standards, demonstrate improved behavior, and develop the skills to become life-long learners who overcome the academic and social challenges of their global community.

The Mount Carmel Community School plans to address many community needs by implementing an overall focus of developing a community of learners who take responsibility for their own learning and the growth of the community through active participation in decision-making processes. The school will provide opportunities for the students, staff, parents, and community leaders, to learn in a supportive environment as curriculum is designed to help address problems faced in the community.

Need:

Since the origin of the charter school debate the vast majority of the African American community has been on the side opposing chartering schools. There was a great fear that resources would be taken away from the public school systems and would further hamper

these already struggling public schools. Over 90% of school aged African American, Hispanic, and other minorities, attend public schools. When the racial census is taken in the inner city public schools, the percentage is dramatically higher. Historically, suburban public schools and some rural public schools have out performed inner city public schools.

Many educators would suggest that one of the reasons for the poor performance of inner city public schools is the lack of resources. They would contend that more resources in these schools would translate into specialized attention for at-risk students. More financial resources would purchase computers, convert into fewer students in each classroom, more competent and motivated teachers, more special programs, more tutorial assistance, more teaching assistants in the classrooms to handle disruptive students and help special needs students so that the main teacher could commit his/her time to classroom instruction. Teachers could be paid more so the profession would attract and retain the brightest minds in the community. More resources would convert into more effective initiatives to encourage parental involvement in the schools. The lack of dollars is a major problem for inner city schools. The advent of charter schools would raise the prospect of having even lesser resources for already flailing inner city public schools. This reality sharply increased the anxiety level of the vast majority of persons in the inner city sub cultural community.

As different states around the nation adopted charter school legislation and these charters were organized in African American and generally disenfranchised and poor communities, the opinion of the African American community began to change. Charter schools in the inner cities of Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Los Angeles, California; the Edison Project in Detroit, Michigan; and others demonstrated to the African American community that charters do have the potential of enhancing their community.

The community is enhanced when charter schools curriculums are tailored to meet the particular needs of at-risk children in the community. This community is enhanced also because competitive pressure is thrust upon public schools to out perform, or, as a minimum, to perform as well as the charter school – also functioning with limited resources. Because of traditional funding formulas, public schools and charter schools are in competition for the same *market*. Until now the public system had no competition, hence, there was little incentive for these schools to raise their levels of expectation and performance when resources were limited. Finally, because of more relaxed restrictions on instructional delivery techniques and other intervention strategies, the charter school provides the possibility to demonstrate for legislators, competing public schools, and parents, innovative methods that do work and which do not work. Thus, legislators are able to direct funding for all schools to programs and initiatives that have proven efficacy.

In the Indianapolis Public School system, unprecedented initiatives are underway to improve the school facilities and to hold schools accountable for the academic performance in their respective buildings. It is our belief that these bold moves are, at least in part, a response to the emergence of the charter school likelihood in Indianapolis.

When there is *healthy* competition the ground is fertile for education to become better for all the students.

African Americans have become increasingly more disenchanted with the quality of education that their children receive in public school systems. The frustrations and disenchantment is extended to a distrust of the community (its systems, programs, and services) in general. The African American community is now poised and ready to try charter schools. In fact, “support for school vouchers has fluctuated over the past four years, but African Americans have consistently been more supportive of this issue than whites”.

Educational philosophy:

The school’s educational foundation centers on the works of Lev S. Vygotsky who “ Believe that individual development could not be understood without reference to the social and cultural context within which development is embedded” (Driscoll, 2000, p. 240). Vygotsky called the gap between what learners are capable of doing on their own and what they are not capable of doing on their own, the “zone of proximal development”. Operating within the zone of proximal development, learners reach their potential with the assistance of others, through various problem-solving techniques. The curricular approach for the school will be to identify and target the “zone” of each student (adult and child) and to provide appropriate instruction to bridge the gap between what is already developed in the learner and the potential development of the learner.

Mount Carmel Community School plans to meet the expressed goals. We will accurately assess learning by taking into account that every student brings different knowledge and skills to the task of any learning situation or problem-solving requirement. Learning will be assessed by obtaining evidence of behavioral and cognitive growth. Through inquiry and problem-based methods of instruction, the school will provide opportunities for individual growth and assessment utilizing a variety of tools such as state and national standardized tests, in-house periodically administered tests and quizzes, rubrics, portfolios, and exhibitions.

Academic Standards:

The Mount Carmel Community School will embrace the Indiana academic standards as the basic guide posts of the instructional program. We anticipate serving grades 1 through 8. The following is an example of exit standards for Mathematics, English Language Arts, and Social Studies.

Mathematics: Eighth graders should be able to draw valid conclusions and make informed judgments through a process of utilizing inquiry skills, reasoning and logic (Indiana standard – Develop reasoning skills and apply them to problem Solving situations.)

Language Arts: Eighth graders should use organizational skills, audience awareness, appropriate vocabulary and grammar, both verbal and nonverbal presentation skills to plan and deliver effective oral presentations. (Indiana standard – Communicate orally with people of all ages by 10 summarizing ideas and acknowledging different points of view and 20 giving accurate information.)

Social Studies: Eighth graders should have a knowledge of world cultures, including history, traditions, contributions and people (Indiana Standard – Examine the influences of diverse world cultures on the development of American culture.)

Various teaching strategies will be implemented so that each student will be able to function at her/his appropriate developmental level. Students will engage in ongoing assessment activities so that teachers, students, and parents will have adequate documentation of progress throughout the school year. Students must demonstrate proficiency in at least three (3) of the core subjects to be promoted to the next grade level. During the next school year, the student must engage in regular tutorial sessions in the one deficient core subject.

Curriculum:

Mount Carmel Community School has chosen to combine rigorous instruction in the four core subjects -- Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, and Language Arts -- with an understanding of individual cultural heritage, respect for individual differences, self discipline, social responsibility and service to the community. All subjects taught at the school will be aligned with Indiana academic standards. The curriculum will be subject to ongoing evaluation and revision as we monitor its effectiveness in meeting the needs of the community of the community. The SETCLAE (Self-Esteem Through Culture Leads to Academic Excellence) program will be examined and evaluated for its ability to assist us with meeting our stated goals. Appendix B charts a sample of objectives, content, and skills to be taught in the main subject areas at each grade level. These are aligned with Indiana academic standards.

Assessment:

To accurately assess learning, the Mount Carmel Community School must take into account that every learner brings different knowledge to the task of problem solving. No one measurement tool can provide adequate evidence of behavioral and cognitive growth for a student. For this reason, the school will utilize multiple measurement tools to 10 record and report student progress, 20 monitor and adjust teaching strategies to meet the needs of the students, and 3) make necessary revisions to the curriculum to meet our highest possible educational standards.

First, and foremost, the school will administer the ISTEP/CTBS at the prescribed grade levels as mandated by the state of Indiana. In addition, the Stanford Achievement Tests will be administered annually. Individual Achievement tests will be administered to all students performing at the upper 15 % and lower 15% of the educational achievement curve to assist in remedial and enhancement educational efforts for the students in these special categories. The results of these tests will be used to make adjustments to the curriculum in order to address identified problem areas. The results of these tests will also serve as a motivator and cause for celebration to highlight the hard work, effort, and success of the students and faculty of the Mount Carmel Community School.

Classroom teachers will utilize a variety of assessment tools including written and oral tests/quizzes that will be administered daily, weekly, and upon completion of certain units. Rubrics, portfolios, and exhibitions are among the other tools that classroom teachers will use to determine student progress and evaluate their own teaching strategies. Students and parents will receive feedback from teachers on a daily/weekly basis to highlight commendable academic and behavioral performances as well as suggestions for improving the student performance in one or both areas. In addition to receiving formal interim reports every 6 to 9 weeks, student-led conferences and parent-teacher conferences may be scheduled in order to provide a more detailed picture for parents and students of the progress that is being made in the classroom.

Written and oral testing are but one opportunity for students to demonstrate learning. Students will also have to demonstrate learning through active participation in cooperative group activities, class discussions, group and individual presentations, journal writing, research, self evaluations, portfolios, and service to the community. Completion of all homework assignments is a must for every student to learn and achieve success at the Mount Carmel Community School.

As students matriculate through the school, each will maintain an “Academic Portfolio” that will chronicle the progress from entrance to the exit grade. This portfolio, which will be housed at the school will be readily accessible to the students, their parents, and the faculty. The portfolio will contain various samples of student work selected by the students and their teachers. The portfolio will become the property of the student when he/she completes the final grade offered at the Mount Carmel Community School.

Special Student Populations:

Mount Carmel Community School will be designed to meet statutory guidelines as well as tailored to meet the needs of the targeted student population. Since our hope is to impact “at-risk” students, we begin with a basic philosophy of individual differences, individual assessment, and planning individual education plans for each of the students. We do recognize that special education (at both the high and low achieving ends of the achievement/ability spectrum) present special problems for schools even in the best of circumstances. The staff to student cost ratio is very high and the cost of intervention tools, diagnostic and assessment tools, etc. is very high. Despite these obstacles, it is felt

that Mount Carmel will be able to adequately (and effectively) identify and educate students with special educational needs even outside those of our at-risk population. The instructional staff recruited will come with training, expertise, and/or strong interest in special education. Continuous in-service training will be offered to assist the instructional staff in planning and implementing special educational plans for the special needs students. The instructional staff, outside consultants, and a cadre of school and child clinical psychologists will be utilized to accurately assess/reassess or diagnose the children who may come with labels of “learning disability” or otherwise be eligible for special education interventions and services. Educational planning staff meetings will continually be held to determine the best combination of services needed by each student in the special needs categories and who (and location) will be best suited to provide the educational, remedial, or enhancement interventions.

Similarly, students who have limited English proficiency such that educational efforts are anticipated to be ineffective, will be continually assessed by both the regular school staff and outside consultants. The services of special consultants will be contracted to assist in bridging the language gap and tutoring to a level of English proficiency such that education may be expected to progress at the required rate.

Budget and Financial Matters:

The budget and estimated financial costs for the start up and the first several years operation of the school have been meticulously outlined by the board members knowledgeable in these matters. Assumptions were made based on our understanding of the current funding formulas and the funds that would be available to the school. Since the various funds would be available at different times, often long after services are required or salaries are due, alternate funding, short term loans, etc have been considered. The school did approach the lending institution in the Fall of 2001 concerning the loan application but did not proceed with it when the initial charter was not granted at that time. The budget and financial matters appear in Appendix C.

Governance and Management:

The Mount Carmel Community School Corporation, Inc. is an Indiana nonprofit corporation. The corporation submitted Federal Form 1023, Application for Recognition of Exemption under Section 501 (c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code on October 1, 2001. That application packet was returned since the corporation applied under the status of a public school. Since no charter had been granted at that time to the corporation, we were advised to hold the application until the charter status is determined in our favor and then resubmit the packet.

The board of directors will set the policies and direction for the corporation. Board members will elect a chairperson, vice-chairperson, secretary, and treasurer. The board of directors will select the principal of the school. Additionally, the board of directors

will establish a Personnel Review Committee to review and approve all new hires. The principal will have responsibility for personnel, curriculum, facilities, administration, and community involvement. Additionally, consultants will be utilized to assist the school's administration with financial management, other special assessments, and educational needs in other areas.

At this point in time, the Mount Carmel Community School Corporation has not contracted with any Educational Management Company to assist or offer consultation in any aspect of the Application preparation or in the recruiting of staff, funding, or any aspect of the programming should a charter be granted. We have, however, talked initially with two such companies. Following these discussions, we still lean heavily towards not involving such a firm in our efforts. We have not eliminated the possibility, but to date, we have not submitted an application to any other charter granting source.

Under Indiana law, each charter school must be reviewed at least once every five years. During the first year of operation, each Mount Carmel School Corporation will finalize its goals and accountability plan. Upon approval by the Mayor, the accountability plan would then become an amendment to the school's charter and a part of the legally binding contract. Mount Carmel School will submit an annual report and fiscal audit. Additionally, it is understood that the Mayor will coordinate site visits periodically to substantiate the school's annual report claims.

An external certified public accounting firm will conduct a financial and compliance audit after the close of each fiscal year. The audit report will be available to the Mayor's Office, Indiana Department of Education, grantor agencies, and entities that provide financial support for the school.

The school will follow all of the guidelines outlined by the Mayor's Office for self evaluation at the end of the third year along with a 3-4 day site visit to corroborate the school's self evaluation. It is understood that as a result of the site visit, the school will be ranked into one of the following categories: exemplary, acceptable, or needs improvement.

The Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws, and other supporting documents appear in Appendix D.

Goals:

Mount Carmel Community School has many goals – our reasons for wanting to embark on a charter school. Among these and the ways we anticipate measuring progress towards or reaching the goals are:

Academic performance: It is our goal that each student and his/her family will have entered into a personal academic performance contract with the school staff. This contract will have as a minimum, the mastery of the Indiana state standards for each

grade level in each subject level. These will be measured by the devices previously outlined -- the standardized tests, in-house tests, and other measures. Pre and post group and individual achievement tests will also be utilized. Additionally, the school has as a major goal to instill in the student and her/his family, a zeal for learning. It is hoped that this will continue throughout the life-time of the student and contribute to the likelihood that the student will be a life-long learner and a positive contributor to the larger community. This can be measured by the anticipated decrease in both group and individual discipline rates in the school, a decrease in the rates of disruptive behavior of the student as compared to his previous academic placement, and a report by the parents and family of decreased behavioral problems at home and in the community.

Organizational viability: It is felt that the staff is an extremely important part of the instructional picture. It is the goal of the school to recruit and retain quality teachers who come with a strong commitment for special interventions in the educational process. We would hope to both recruit teachers who are already experienced in special education and will embark on an on-going continuing education/in-service for both experienced teachers and those who come with more excitement and interest than experience. We would measure the progress towards these goals by monitoring the credentials of the staff, and the additional courses, workshops, and in-service hours in the appropriate areas they accumulate. It is also encouraged that all staff have continual supportive contact with each other, the administrators, and the special consulting staff such that there are regularly scheduled staff meetings where difficult student issues may be discussed and educational plans refined.

School-specific objectives: The school also has a commitment to the community. We accept as a goal that the community will be enhanced by our presence. We also want to shape and facilitate discussion, planning, and involvement of the students, their families, and the community leaders in a cooperative effort to address community issues and improve the community. We would measure these goals by the attendance rates at parent-teacher conferences, community involvement in school activities, adult involvement in school sponsored, planned, or endorsed continuing education experiences, etc.

Summary of Strengths:

We feel the founding committee has articulated our concern for the historical lack of demonstrated performance of the at-risk student. We feel that the current plan provides a beginning point to address some of these individual behavioral and academic deficits. We firmly believe that parent/community involvement in the school will create the atmosphere for heightened success of our students. The physical plant of the Mount Carmel Community School is ideal for the learning environment. There is sufficient space for the requested enrollment. There is recreational and extra curricular facilities and space available for the students and the community. Finally, we are excited about the likelihood to provide community service and continued educational opportunities to the larger adult community we serve.